Further progress has been made in the development of Native Administration during the year. This progress, unfortunately, continues to be slow, and must be so until facilities for the setting up of native courts are available. Nevertheless, it has been possible in many parts of the island to lay the foundations of such Courts, and councils of elders, arbitrating in native custom, have proved of great assistance in administration.

—Charles N.F. Bengough, District Officer Malaita, District Annual Report, 1941

Introduction

This chapter covers the years after Bell and until the Second World War reached the Pacific. The argument pursued in this book has been that most of ‘Making Mala’ occurred between the 1870s and the mid-1920s. Then followed a slow period during the 1930s and until 1942, when, hurried by the war, the protectorate administration introduced a few crucial developments. The Bell massacre in east Kwaio in 1927 was a substantial setback but an aberration, a piece of bad luck that could have occurred at any time between 1909 and 1927. The Pacific War provided a space for the emergence of the Maasina Rule movement between 1944 and 1952, which brought radical changes.
There was no dramatic decline in the number of labourers leaving Malaita during the 1930s, but Malaitans, like other Solomon Islanders, were less able to pay taxes and there was a concomitant decrease in the revenues available to tax. Inexorably, government and mission services declined and were stretched thin. Some schools ceased operations altogether. At the same time, the administration of the island moved from a pattern of reaction to Malaitan truculence to routine activities and violence declined markedly. Health services improved, roads were constructed and some Malaitans began to be involved in district administration and local courts. Without the war, the economic downturn would eventually have revived. Without the war, the disturbance caused by Maasina Rule might never have occurred, or perhaps would have been more easily controlled by the government.

In the 1930s, Christians were probably about equal in number to followers of ancestral spirits, and certainly were after the 1940s, and a Christian ascendency followed during the 1950s. Even the most conservative Malaitans were effectively brought under the protectorate administration through taxation and visits from government patrols, although many hamlets in the central mountains were seldom if ever visited by officials and never by Christian missionaries. As will be abundantly clear, the years covered in this chapter were radically different from the period from 1909 to the mid-1920s. Malaita had become a regularised part of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate.

David Akin’s 2013 book *Colonialism, Maasina Rule, and the Origins of Malaitan Kastom* provides an excellent introduction to these directly prewar years. Akin’s analysis is based on a deep knowledge of Malaitan culture and history, and uses the Malaitan Government archives closely. He concludes that government officials often overestimated their understanding of Malaitans. This chapter will take note of Akin’s corrective text and register here what all historians know: that colonial sources have their weaknesses; but then so too does oral testimony. To our advantage, the government’s archives provide exact statistics and its officers were often perceptive within their personal limits. As long as their files are used with caution, and always compared against surviving indigenous sources, they, like the mission archives preceding them, provide a crucial outline.
Killing Mista Belo

There is a sense of satisfaction for any historian who knows what is about to occur when the historical actors under consideration do not. The Malaita Government records cease in late 1927 and do not begin again until February 1928. The reason is that William Bell, cadet officer Kenneth C. Lillies and 13 police were murdered on 5 October 1927 during a government tax-collecting patrol at Sinalagu Harbour in the Kwaio area of east Malaita. This was the most notable single event in the prewar British Solomons, both the attack and the vicious official retribution.

Men primarily from three descent groups inland from Sinalagu made the attack. Two Kwaio men were killed as the government party gamely fought back. Most of the dead were police from north Malaita. Two weeks later, a government punitive force consisting of 50 Australian naval personnel, 28 European special constables, and some 50 Malaitan police and volunteers (primarily from the north) arrived at Sinalagu on MV Ranadi and HMAS Adelaide (an Australian warship called into action), along with the Australian naval collier HMAS Biloela as the supply ship. This was the last time the British used a naval ship to attack Solomon Islanders, although there was no bombardment, just an extensive land expedition.

The 1927 reprisals led to simmering resentment and ongoing compensation claims from the Kwaio. In 1977, on the 50th anniversary of the deaths, anthropologist Roger Keesing suggested some form of official ceremony take place, but permission was refused by Chief Minister Peter Kenilorea. A private ceremony was organised at Sinalagu and Ngongosila, attended by Bell’s only surviving sister. Then, in 1980, Keesing and Peter Corris published _Lightning Meets the West Wind_. The book is a good combination of Pacific history and anthropology, but in other circumstances it might have gone unnoticed beyond academic circles. Its publication actually had little impact in Kwaio itself, although it disturbed the provincial and national governments. However, in 1984, east Kwaio people boycotted the national election, although they agreed

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3 _Ibid._, 148–205; Akin 1999b; Keesing 1990a; BSIP 14/28, SG to DO JCB, 9 Sept 1930.
4 Keesing 1990a; information from David Akin, Mar 2016.
to a bye-election in 1985. Kenilorea visited east Kwaio twice while Prime Minister to try to sort out the grievances. His autobiography reveals him to have been quite uncomfortable in dealing with the Kwaio.\textsuperscript{5}

How did it all happen? Bell returned from leave in mid-1925, as testy as ever, earning a rebuke from Resident Commissioner Richard Kane.\textsuperscript{6} While DO he had been to Sinalagu several times. In July 1925, for instance, he held court at Sinalagu and delivered tax receipts to ex-labourers of the Malayta Company. The party worked on improving the landing place at the leaf tax-house that had been erected for government use. Joe Maeana, the local village headman, reported that he knew that a number of men had not paid their head tax for 1924, and the next day Maeana and another village headman, Kwaiatiboo, brought in a few men who had taxes to pay.\textsuperscript{7} Bell was back at Sinalagu in October for a day, while collecting taxes along the east coast.\textsuperscript{8} In 1926, taxes were collected there on 7, 12 and 13 February. At the same time, Bell and Lillies investigated a murder from two years before and another committed just a few days before they arrived. Bell recorded no incidents of noncompliance or signs of agitation.\textsuperscript{9}

Bell returned to the east coast in May to investigate an alleged conspiracy to kill him.\textsuperscript{10} Ramo Irokwato in Baegu had suggested that Bell should be assassinated. His reasons were the head tax, the forced building of the tax-collection houses and compulsory road building. Irokwato had not done anything further and the incident was dismissed as minor. Bell commented:

Irokwato is not a native of high status by birth, but, at one time, he was greatly feared as a professional murderer and thief. His past unscrupulous career and the fact that he has few friends and many enemies renders it unlikely that any advice which he may have given would be favourably received by natives outside his particular community.\textsuperscript{11}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{5} Allan 1990, 157; Kenilorea 2008, 267–71.
\item \textsuperscript{6} SINA, BSIP 14/24, Acting SG to DO WRB, 17 Aug 1925.
\item \textsuperscript{7} SINA, BSIP 14/58, ‘Log of District Vessel Auki’, 1 July – 30 Sept 1925, DO WRB to RC RRK, 9 Oct 1925.
\item \textsuperscript{8} SINA, BSIP 14/59, ‘Log of District Vessel Auki’, 1 Jan – 31 Mar 1926, DO WRB to RC RRK, 13 Mar 1926.
\item \textsuperscript{9} SINA, BSIP 14/59, DO WRB, ‘Report for the Quarter’ ending 30 June 1916, 29 May 1926.
\item \textsuperscript{10} SINA, BSIP 14/59, DO WRB to RC RRK, ‘Quarterly Report’, 14 July 1926.
\item \textsuperscript{11} SINA, BSIP 14/59, DO WRB to RC RRK, ‘Quarterly Report’, 14 July 1926.
\end{itemize}
Not easily intimidated, William Bell clearly had no idea what was about to occur.

He was back in east Kwaio in November 1926, reporting a severe influenza epidemic, for which he left medicine with the subdistrict headman at Sinalagu, and he investigated a murder at ‘Oloburi. Bell did not visit Sinalagu during the early months of 1927, but did so in May. He collected a few outstanding taxes and inquired into a marital disturbance.

On 30 August 1927, Bell applied for four-and-a-half months leave and was unhappy when the administration replaced him with Francis B. Filose, a married man who would have to share his house during the changeover period. He did not want his bachelor lifestyle disturbed by the presence of strangers, particularly a woman, and the government had been negligent in not providing separate housing. Bell and Lillies then set out on their last fateful tax-collecting expedition to the east coast. No single act led to their deaths. It was a matter of personalities, among the Kwaio, and of course Bell’s sometimes belligerent attitudes toward administering Malaita.

Figure 10.1: A member of the ‘Whiskey Army’ expedition, possibly one of the crew from HMS *Adelaide* sent from Australia to support the 1927 government expedition to east Kwaio. The Malaitan man is from Kwaio. Source: Jeff Willmot Collection, 274.

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14 SINA, BSIP 14/60, DO WRB to RC RRK, 30 Aug 1927.
Similar to what always occurred in labour trade attacks, the Kwaio assailants had made preparations to ensure the support of ancestral spirits. The massacre in Kwaio is still talked about today—it has become a Solomon Islands trope. The manner in which the government reacted to the killings, by inflicting almost indiscriminate retribution, did it no credit.

Although the Europeans were ineffectual in the rugged mountainous terrain, the north Malaitan police and volunteers were efficient and ruthless, avenging the deaths of their own people who had been in Bell’s police. Women and girls were gang-raped and many were shot, children were murdered and prisoners were executed and mutilated. The retaliatory raid roamed north to Uru Harbour, into the ‘Oloburi area and into west Kwaio, far away from the area where the attack had occurred. Keesing and Corris estimated that around 60 people were shot and others, some children, died from exposure while hiding in the jungle. Ancestral shrines and sacred men’s houses were desecrated, which the Kwaio believe caused their angry ancestors to kill more descendants later through illness and mishap.

One hundred and ninety-eight men, most innocent of the crimes charged, were taken to prison in Tulagi. The event played out between October 1927 and February 1928, with an astonishingly high death rate amongst the men imprisoned: 173 were hospitalised for dysentery during their time at Tulagi and 30 died (28 in 1928 and two in 1929). The government tried to explain away some of the deaths as due to old age and senility, but while a few of the prisoners were elderly, the question then becomes why such vulnerable men were in prison, initially uncharged with any offence, and what role they could have played in the attack? Perfunctory trials eventually proceeded. Eleven were charged with murder and six were executed. Seventy-one were tried for offences less than murder, of whom 51 were acquitted. Six were imprisoned for life, eight for 20 years, two for 12 years and one for three years. Their wives and families either fled further inland or took shelter in the SSEM villages along the coast or at the SDA mission base at Uru. There was little food left in their gardens and there were few materials available to rebuild houses. The Kwaio massacre and its aftermath was the most severe random punishment ever meted out by British authorities in the Pacific. The Kwaio people have never forgotten.

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15 Moorhouse 1929.
The 1928 official investigation into the massacre by Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Harry Moorhouse, the retired lieutenant-governor of Nigeria (1921–25), critiqued the BSIP administration and contributed to moves to change from direct to indirect rule, along the lines of British administration in African colonies.\textsuperscript{16} Moorhouse advised against Kane’s plan to relocate the Kwaio population to Isabel Island, and recommended that indirect rule be gradually introduced.\textsuperscript{17} The next few resident commissioners all had some African background, which aided the policy change. While the social structures of Solomons societies were much smaller in scale than those of most African societies, the argument in favour of indirect rule—the ‘dual mandate’ Lugard model, based on experience in Nigeria—was lauded as more efficient in terms of cost and commercial outcomes, and best for ‘developing’ native peoples. Lord Lugard had advocated that all officers learn a local language and understand local cultures. He argued for stationing officers in one place for as long as possible and that they should tour often around their districts. While this was good advice, one can doubt the sincerity and indeed common sense of British imperialism. Lugard’s model came from chiefly tribal societies and foundered in Malaita and other places where leadership was sited at lower levels and more fluid.\textsuperscript{18}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{feeder.jpg}
\caption{Feeding the labourers and police who accompanied the punitive expedition to east Kwaio, 1927.}
\label{fig:feeder}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{17} Akin 2013a, 49, 51.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 50–55.
After the Bell massacre government functions were slowly restored, with various officers seconded to fill the gap during 1928–29, until Colin E. J. Wilson took over as DO in May 1929. Wilson had been one of the officers in charge of the punitive expedition in Kwaio.

Map 16: Major settlements around Malaita, 1930s.
Source: Courtesy of Vincent Verheyen.
The Economy in the 1930s

In 1909, Malaita was only notionally part of the BSIP. During the second half of the 1910s and up to 1927, Malaita had a stable but aggressive DO in William Bell. During his years, the government process had already slowly begun to change from direct to indirect administration, augmented by reforms in labour recruiting and taxation. By the time Bell died, Malaita was on the way to stronger incorporation into the protectorate, although the final components were not added until just before the Second World War. The population in 1935 was approximately 38,000, excluding those away working in other parts of the protectorate. This figure subdivided into: Bali, from To` aba` ita and south to Fataleka (11,200); Kwara` ae (9,600); Kwaio (6,500); 'Are` are (6,200); and Small Malaita (4,870).

The Solomons economy depended on one crop, copra, the profitability of which was often marginal. Copra was produced by smoke-drying the flesh of coconuts. Solomons copra was used only for soap manufacture, the bottom end of the market, and the protectorate produced an insignificant 5 per cent of the world’s smoke-dried copra. The choice to build an economy based on copra was sound before the First World War, when prices were high, but the postwar BSIP economy became shaky. Copra prices fluctuated during the war and again in 1922–24. Then, in 1929, the copra price fell back to its 1924 level, and the next year crashed further. Bennett calculated that in 1935 the price was ‘less than £1 4s. or £13 below the 1929 price…’ The smaller plantation companies often were financially overextended and were foreclosed on by Burns Philp & Co. or W.R. Carpenter & Co., who cut off their credit and ruined them. The big companies had enough resources to weather the financial storm, but were nevertheless relieved when prices rose again in 1936. The reprieve was short-lived, and prices soon fell again until 1940, by which time there were war-driven shipping shortages.

Malaita still had no substantial export economy other than labour, which remained the main source of cash and goods. The Malaya Company plantations continued to operate, and added cattle to their operations just as the other larger plantation companies had done, although its early

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19  See Map 4 in Chapter 1. Bali includes To’ aba` ita, Baelelea, Lau, Baegu and Fataleka.
economic promise was never achieved. During the Great Depression years the company almost closed, some of its land leases were cancelled, and its operations continued at such low levels that only a few casual labourers were required. It operated until 1936, when it was sold for £95,000 to Fairymead Sugar Company Ltd (also controlled by the Young family) against the wishes of the minority shareholders. By 1939, the Fairymead company operated only from Baunani and Manaba, each under a European overseer, and employed just 63 labourers. In the final analysis, the Malayta Company was avaricious and its management tactics alienated the local people. It did much better in the Russell Islands until it was ruined by the Pacific War.23

The MacCrimmons’ 1920s Mala Timber Company discarded its logging ambitions and became a trading business. The Depression closed off Australian markets for hardwood. MacCrimmon shut down his sawmill in July 1930 and sold his equipment to Boldery & Cheetham (timber millers). In September 1930, the couple departed to join the Vanikoro Kauri Timber Company, MacCrimmon became manager and his wife the company’s medical officer.24 Boldery & Cheetham failed and sold out to the Mala Development Company, managed by G.H. Robertson, but in 1931 that company cancelled its leases at Su’u and went into liquidation. They were replaced by a New South Wales company, McLeod, Bolton & Co., which leased the Su’u land and took over the Mala Development Company trade stores around Malaita.25 However, by 1934 they had closed their stores and sold their leases to Kwong Chong & Co. of Tulagi. The Malayta Company continued to operate one store at Su’u and another at Abu near ‘Aoke, and financed a few licensed hawkers.26

In 1929, the only Malaita District exports were 727 tons of copra, 40 tons of ivory nuts (from sago palms) and 17 tons of trochus shell, mainly collected by Chinese traders. The few local producers were based around Malu‘u and Fo‘odo in the north and on Small Malaita. Once prices began to fall during the 1930s, most Malaitans stopped preparing copra. The Small Malaita trochus shell harvest also declined as the reefs there

25 SINA, BSIP 14/63, A/DO AFJW to RC FNA, 13 Jan 1932; BSIP 14/64, DO JCB to SG, 8 May 1933.
were depleted. The Langalanga people had entered the modern economy more fully than other Malaitans. They continued to supply the wharf labour for Tulagi, Makambo and Gavutu, traded in pigs with Gela and remained the largest manufacturers of shell wealth. As early as the 1910s, a few Langalanga men became local agents for trade stores owned by the Malayta Company. In the 1920s, the Mala Development Company picked leading Malaitans to be its storekeepers. An entrepreneurial few managed to establish limited lines of credit with Burns Philp to purchase cutters, which they used to transport stevedores and trade with Gela. Though, as mentioned, government policy discouraged Chinese traders from establishing permanent stores at ‘Aoke, but they traded from vessels that plied the coast buying copra and trochus shell. During the 1930s, a few dozen Malaitans had store or hawker licences. Kwong Chong & Co.’s presence was only made possible by the economic downturn in the 1930s, which caused Australian-owned trading companies to withdraw.

Table 7: BSIP annual labour statistics, 1924–39.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Malaita Labourers Recruited</th>
<th>Malaitans as a Percentage of Total Recruits</th>
<th>Total Labourers Recruited</th>
<th>Total Labourers Employed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>1,438</td>
<td>69.73</td>
<td>2,062</td>
<td>5,766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>1,439</td>
<td>64.47</td>
<td>2,232</td>
<td>5,741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>1,813</td>
<td>68.03</td>
<td>2,665</td>
<td>6,368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>1,527</td>
<td>64.70</td>
<td>2,360</td>
<td>6,115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>1,459</td>
<td>67.04</td>
<td>2,176</td>
<td>6,016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>1,408</td>
<td>70.22</td>
<td>2,005</td>
<td>5,171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>1,276</td>
<td>66.84</td>
<td>1,909</td>
<td>5,363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>839</td>
<td>75.45</td>
<td>1,112</td>
<td>4,301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>1,121</td>
<td>64.94</td>
<td>1,726</td>
<td>3,927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>690</td>
<td>62.55</td>
<td>1,103</td>
<td>2,495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>759</td>
<td>64.98</td>
<td>1,168</td>
<td>3,578</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>834</td>
<td>74.33</td>
<td>1,122</td>
<td>2,043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>977</td>
<td>85.25</td>
<td>1,146</td>
<td>2,373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>1,111</td>
<td>71.77</td>
<td>1,548</td>
<td>2,628</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>968</td>
<td>67.55</td>
<td>1,433</td>
<td>2,471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>955</td>
<td>72.45</td>
<td>1,318</td>
<td>2,383</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The Depression affected the movement of labour and returns from taxation, although compared with the total decline in employment of indentured labour after 1930, Malaitans still averaged 69 per cent of the protectorate’s labour supply from 1924 to 1939. As shown in Table 7, on average, 917 labourers left Malaita or were reindentured each year between 1931 and 1939. In 1935, the minimum labourer’s wage was reduced from £1 to 10/- a month, with a related decrease in the beach bonus from £6 to £3. During the 1920s, labour conditions had improved, but in the 1930s planters cut corners and were more exploitative. The workers were fully conscious of the deteriorating conditions, although recruiters, planters and government officers managed to delude themselves that the labourers did not notice. How could they not notice that their wages had halved? They had no knowledge of the deterioration in the world economy to help them understand the sudden drop in their wages. Many, particularly those from the southern half of Malaita, refused to work for reduced wages. The reduced wages decreased the money available to pay taxes. Recruiters followed the tax-collectors around Malaita because men were easier to recruit when they were being threatened with imprisonment for nonpayment. Inland people, in particular, had nothing to sell except their labour, but even so, most recruits no longer left their beach bonuses with their families. Just as recruits had done when recruiting to Queensland and Fiji, they began to take their beach payments with them, or a large part of the bonus, so as to have some money during their first few months of work and to compensate for the reduced wages.28

28 Akin 2013a, 94–97.
With less cash circulating, taxes had to be reduced to 2s 6d. Recruiting continued in north Malaita and from Kwaio, but ceased in 'Are'are due to fears of depopulation. Half of the 1,200 'Are'are taxpayers were expected to be unable to pay, with similar problems in Kwaio. In 1935, taxes varied by region, with poorer areas paying less: 2s 6d in 'Are'are; 3/- to 5/- in Kwara'ae and 5/- per head in the northern Bali region. This was reduced in 1938 to 1/- for all inland peoples, although the 5/- rate was maintained around the coast. Men could also work off their

tax debt through communal labour. These reductions, fought for by the DOs, were often opposed by Tulagi. Malaitans never understood why they had to pay tax at all, given the paucity of services they received in return. The inland people suffered the most, unable to either pay taxes or purchase the few European luxuries they used—tobacco, clay pipes, machetes and cloth—and most had no access to government or mission health services on Malaita.

Trade in copra from village plantations ceased entirely between 1933 and 1935, then resumed on Small Malaita and at Malu`u and Fo`odo. By 1937, the government sponsored moves to establish village coconut plantations and all new roads continued to be lined with coconut palms. Several trading stations were also operating, all Chinese-owned except the SSEM store at Onepusu. There were few openings for indigenous entrepreneurs, as Malaita’s 1935 annual report noted:

> The lack of productive coconut groves, the growing scarcity of trochus shell, and the tendency of the wage earners of the Tai [Tae in Lau] Lagoon and Langa Langa to spend their wage earnings at Makambo and Tulagi, do not encourage efforts. It is true, too, that the natives who might be expected to open small trading stations in this district are already engaged in such profitable matters as transporting wharf labourers to and from Tulagi, and also in negotiations over the buying and selling of cutters.

The total effect of this economic gloom is hard to calculate, but certainly there was anger and hardship on Malaita, which contributed to the airing of new political ideas like those of the Fallowes movement, which started on Isabel Island. Any possibility of further rebellions was cut short by the Pacific War, although during the war there were labour strikes among Labour Corps men, and economic discontents fuelled the postwar Maasina Rule movement.

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32 Ibid., 33.
33 Bennett 1987, 259–63; Akin 2013a, 101–06.
Health

Officials and missionaries were certain that Malaita’s population had declined significantly. Rev. Arthur Hopkins, a long-term resident of Lau Lagoon (1902–14), suggested several causes. Overall he thought that there had been a decline in family sizes. He also identified a trend toward men marrying late, which may have related to men leaving the island for several years while participating in the external and internal labour trades. My own research in Queensland suggests that many labourers stayed away for 20 years or spent terms in different colonies, and Judith Bennett’s interviews with ex-labourers from BSIP plantations suggest that in the early twentieth century Malaitans spent on average about seven-and-a-half years away, on more than one contract, with a return home in between.34 Hopkins also thought that polygamy had decreased and that abortions were widespread, as were venereal diseases. Dysentery and other diseases heightened infant mortality.35 Woodford thought that the labour trade was responsible for the population decrease, and added ‘injudicious use of unsuitable clothing’ that when worn damp led to pulmonary disease. He also credited the decline to the introduction of new diseases such as dysentery and influenza, and an increase in yaws, notably more prevalent among the coastal peoples.36 If we extend this introduction of new diseases back to the 1870s, when labour movements began, by the 1930s there had been 60 years of exposure and the deaths rates would have been high over an extended time. The limited amount of medical care available would have done little to offset the decline.

Although epidemics continued to break out, health services had improved in the 1920s and 1930s. A poliomyelitis epidemic in 1928–29 caused many deaths, as did a cerebral-spinal meningitis epidemic in north Malaita during 1936 and an epidemic of German measles (Rubella) in 1939. Tuberculosis remained prevalent. As the economic downturn continued, the protectorate had fewer funds to run the Malaita District vessel, thus limiting the ability of the DOs to collect taxes and supervise health.37

34 Bennett 1987, 186.
36 Woodford 1922, 69. See also Bennett 2014.
Once Dr Holt-MacCrimmon departed in 1930, Su’u Hospital was closed and the buildings were moved to ‘Aoke, leaving only the Hospital of the Epiphany at Fauaabu in northwest Malaita as a major regional hospital.  

Anglican, SDA and government hospitals all began during the 1930s. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Anglicans opened their hospital at Fauaabu. They had a well-trained medical practitioner in Cambridge-educated Dr L.M. Maybury, who arrived late in 1928. The hospital, designed and built by Maybury, opened on 16 June 1929 with an operating theatre and 40 beds in several concrete-floor buildings. There were three trained nurses—his wife Florence, and M.T. Simson and B. Guyles from New Zealand—and six male orderlies. American doctor Sylvester M. Lambert, part of a yaws and hookworm eradication team that visited Fauaabu in the early 1930s, described the hospital and leprosarium as very well run.

Figure 10.4: Hospital of the Epiphany at Fauaabu, northwest Malaita in the 1930s.
Source: British Museum, Lloyd Francis Collection, 1.

39 Detailed documentation on Fauaabu is held by Helen Barrett, of Brisbane, a copy of which is in the author’s possession. The orderlies were John Patterson Nana, Frederick Fafele, Simon Peter Nwasina, Thomas Tosia (short term), Joe Qai (short term) and Ereryn Tharetona (also a teacher).
In 1933, the number of beds was increased to 80. Dr Maybury also began a leprosarium, which consisted of a small concrete ward surrounded by local-style houses for the patients. There were 79 leprosy (Hansen’s disease) patients under treatment in 1930. Despite a government subsidy of £5 to a total cost of around £17 per patient each year, this facility closed in 1933 because of insufficient funds. It reopened on a smaller scale in 1938. Surveys in 1935–36 identified 239 definite and 44 suspected cases of leprosy on Malaita. Further detailed surveys were carried out the next year by Dr James Ross Innes, appointed by the administration.41

Figure 10.5: Qaibaita leper colony, the first in Solomon Islands, was established in 1929 as an outstation of the Hospital of the Epiphany at Fauaabu. In the 1930s it was moved closer, to a new site overlooking the hospital.

Source: British Museum, Lloyd Francis Collection, 4.

Figure 10.6: Patients at the Hospital of the Epiphany at Fauaabu.
Source: British Museum, Lloyd Francis Collection, 2.

Figure 10.7: Training a young boy as a dresser (an orderly) at the Hospital of the Epiphany at Fauaabu.
Source: British Museum, Lloyd Francis Collection, 3.
Onwards from 1933, the SDAs established a primitive hospital at their Kwailabesi mission near Makwano on the shore of Lau Lagoon, which was run by Dr Dorothy Mills-Parker after she joined her husband A.F. Parker there, in 1934. While their proselyting was only marginally successful, their medical work in Lau and Makwano was a great success, although there were constant issues about infringing on Malaitan custom.42

There was no government medical policy for Malaita until 1930, with the only guidance coming from occasional visits from the Tulagi-based touring government medical officer, and DOs trying to deliver basic medical care. Then, in 1931, George Bogese, the first Solomon Islander to graduate from Fiji’s Central Medical School as a Native Medical Practitioner (NMP), was based at ‘Aoke, replaced in 1932 by NMP Fijian Malakai Ravai.43 In 1934, Bogese was convicted of adultery and fined £4. He returned to Malaita again in 1936, and faced a number of serious related charges—rape, incest and indecent assault—concerning one of his daughters, but he was acquitted of them all. Laracy examined the evidence and concluded that the charges were missionary-motivated, and that no white medical officer would have faced the same level of scrutiny. That said, one does come away with the view that he was sexually delinquent.44 He was replaced by Guso Rato Piko from Choiseul.45 In turn, Piko was replaced by Eroni Leauli (another Fijian), and then by two mixed-race NMPs, first Hugh Wheatley, relieved by Geoffrey Küper (July 1940 – July 1941) while he was on leave. Piko also returned for a few months on relief duty during Küper’s time.46 In 1939, there were two dressers (male orderlies) employed at ‘Aoke’s leaf-house hospital and three village-based dressers in other parts of Malaita, with plans to place a NMP at Wairokai Harbour in west ‘Are’ are the next year.47 Dr Nathaniel Critchlow, the BSIP travelling medical officer in the late 1920s and throughout the 1930s, also visited regularly on MV *Hygeia*. The NMPs were responsible for treating leprosy, but did so with varying levels of dedication: Ravai was

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42 Steley 1983, 66.
43 Moore 2013c entry; Laracy 2013, 229–42.
44 Laracy 2013, 235.
46 Moore 2013c entry under ‘Kuper, Heinrich’; Akin 2013a, 379 n 104.
47 SINA, BSIP 14/54, DO WFMC to Senior Medical Officer, 25 Sept 1939; DO CNFB to Senior Medical Officer, 29 July 1941; 14/54, DO Michael James Forster to Senior Medical Officer, 29 Feb 1940; Akin 2013a, 153.
effective, but Bogese lost the confidence of his patients.\footnote{48 SINA, BSIP 27/VI/1, DO GEDS to SG, 'Annual Report, 1936', 23 Dec 1941.} A government leprosarium was built near `Aoke in 1941 and a postnatal clinic was established at `Aoke that same year.\footnote{49 SINA, BSIP 14/54, DO WFMC to Senior Medical Officer, 25 Sept 1939.}

The one concerted disease eradication effort was the Rockefeller Foundation campaign to end yaws and hookworm. On Malaita in the 1920s, the infection rate of yaws was 60 to 65 per cent, and up to 90 per cent among coastal people. This disfiguring and painful disease produces high sickness and infant mortality rates. Intravenous and intramuscular injections of neo-arsphenamine were begun in the late 1920s, aided substantially by the Rockefeller campaign, which provided thousands of injections. Dr Lambert was the director of the 1928–31 campaign, with Dr Menzies in charge of one unit and Dr Harry B. Hetherington (Tulagi’s government medical officer), assisted by Gordon White, was in charge of the other. Each European member of the team had two Islander helpers and a dresser. Native Medical Practitioners, missionaries and members of the foundation’s medical team all gave injections throughout the protectorate, and this brought great relief from yaws. The missions also participated in the campaign: in 1929, staff of the Hospital of the Epiphany gave 696 injections. Individuals travelled long distances to get the ‘nila’ (needle). The Rockefeller visits continued during the 1930s. The drugs used brought a real improvement, although they were not totally effective. Penicillin, available starting in the 1940s, made an enormous difference.\footnote{50 BSIP AR 1930, 13–14; 1931, 6; Boutilier 1974, 28; Akin 2013a, 69–70; Moore 2013c entry ‘Health: Yaws’.}

Although the missions had provided basic medical care since the 1890s and 1900s, their finances and abilities were limited. Once government services and overseas agencies like the Rockefeller Foundation began to intervene into medical care and hospitals like that at Fauaabu began, those Malaitans who received their help could see some return for taxation and incorporation into the protectorate.
Missions and Education

Education remained totally a preserve of the missions. The level of mission influence varied considerably. Small Malaita was mainly under Anglican and Catholic mission influence, with the SSEM the third group. The Melanesian Mission established a small theological college at Maka in 1935, which closed in 1939. The only substantial Melanesian Mission school was a 'Bible school' run at Fiu by Gwendoline Mason, wife of the resident missionary Rev. A.E. Mason. There were also many schools run by indigenous teachers.51

Figure 10.8: SSEM girls’ school at Onepusu, with Mr and Mrs Cronau and son, and Miss Dring.
Source: Deck Collection, Black and White Photographs, 56.

The SSEM trained its own catechists at Onepusu, although the standard was considered to be too low to rate their exemption from taxation.52 In 1935, the SSEM had 113 students at Afio and Onepusu, mainly from Malaita, along with a few from Guadalcanal and Makira. Onepusu School provided basic instruction in reading, writing, singing and manual training, and religious instruction. The Marist mission combined Christianity with education, and was teaching 93 students at Buma and

Rokera. The SDAs slowly established schools, some run by indigenous teachers; although, as with the other denominations, Christian teachings were allied to literacy. Girls made up around one-third of the students in all schools.

Map 17: By the mid-1920s, the SSEM had spread throughout Malaita and Makira, with other bases on Guadalcanal, the Russell Islands and Rennell and Bellona Islands.
Source: Young 1925, facing 256.

The first major inquiry into education on Malaita occurred in 1939, conducted by William C. Groves, who was seconded from the Victorian Government in Australia. Groves reported that the SSEM operated training centres at Onepusu (for men) and Afio (for women), regional schools and innumerable small village-level schools. The village schools were ‘Bible schools’ in which the aim was to inculcate Christianity in
adults and children through literacy in vernacular texts and the Bible in English. The teachers received help to establish themselves but were unpaid and expected to be self-sustaining. The dozen regional schools included boarding and day schools; the teachers were trained at Onepusu or Afio and standards there were higher than in the ‘Bible schools’. There were 136 males and 36 females (mostly wives of male students) enrolled at Onepusu Training Centre. Their ages ranged from 15 to 50 and they were recruited from all areas where the SSEM operated (Malaita, Makira, Guadalcanal and Rennell Island). Afio Girls’ Training School, situated at the western end of Maramasike Passage, enrolled 50 to 60 girls. Joan Deck (sister of Norman, Northcote and Kathy) was the principal, assisted by two European women. Students were taught literacy and handicrafts, the intention being to improve their education but not to alienate them from village life.

Even with its early start, the Melanesian Mission had become the minor partner to the SSEM. The only two Melanesian Mission European priests on Malaita were Rev. Mason at Fiu and Rev. Edwards at Maka Theological Training Institution. Gwounatolo, their new station in Lau Lagoon, was occupied by a group of indigenous Melanesian Brothers who were responsible for teaching in the area. There was an indigenous priest at Fouia in Lau: the school there, planned to be staffed by four teachers, was in abeyance. Adjacent to Malu`u (the most advanced of the SSEM regional schools) was a small Melanesian Mission village school at A`ama operated by Rev. George Kiriau and a deacon, Benjamin Akwa, along with one teacher, Daniel Dosata. The latter had been trained at St Mary’s School at Pauma on Makira and All Hallows’ School at Pawa on Uki Island, the best schools in the protectorate. As already mentioned, Gwendoline Child began teaching on Gela, married Albert Mason and ran schools at Fiu for boys and girls, with teaching in the local Kwara`æ language and in the Anglican lingua franca Mota. There were other village schools but all were faltering. During the five years it operated, Maka Theological Training Institution was the peak educational institution on the island, preparing students for the Anglican priesthood.

At Takwa in the Makwano region in the northeast were two Marist Catholic priests, fathers Joseph Halbwachs from France and Scanlon from New Zealand, and two Marist sisters. The boys’ school there was closed

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53 Moore 2013c entry.
54 Ibid., see entries.
and the only students were 12 girls. The mission’s ability to maintain students was limited by financial straits. Two more schools were operated at Buma by Father Donatien Coicaud, a lay-brother, two religious sisters and two lay-nursing sisters. Thirty-nine boys and young men attended one and 30 girls the other. Two younger priests and three sisters ran the Rokera station, where 43 boys and 45 girls attended school.

In 1939, the Seventh-day Adventist operation was centred at Kwailabesi in Lau Lagoon, close to the Marist station at Takwa and the Anglican station at Gwounatolo. Because no resident SDA European missionary had replaced the Parkers, the hospital was closed, although the school was proceeding efficiently under the care of a teacher from Marovo Lagoon, New Georgia. Ken Ferris, lately from the New Hebrides, had recently arrived to take over. The enrolment was 25 males aged between 10 and 25, and 10 or 12 girls. The language of instruction was Marovo, the SDA *lingua franca*. Students wore school uniforms, which was unusual for the time. Kwailabesi was the only station on Malaita where females wore clothes above the waist.

Malaitans were being educated in local languages, Mota, Marovo, Pijin English and English, an unsatisfactory mixture that compounded the problem of finding adequate texts. English was only in use on the SSEM stations, and even there the standards were low. Groves advised the government to impose more curriculum uniformity, which was difficult to accomplish when the schools were funded by individual, uncooperative denominations. Schools assisted development by teaching modern agricultural techniques, and they were also an avenue for training young women in modern domestic duties. One of Groves’s major recommendations was that a central government school be established, which after the Second World War came to fruition as the ‘Aoke Experimental School, later renamed King George VI School.55

Although there had been plans to begin government schools before the war started, the provision of ‘Aoke Experimental School was in part a response to pressures from Malaitans during Maasina Rule. They were dissatisfied with the standards of the mission schools and felt that, as with medical care, better schooling was a reasonable government *quid pro quo* for taxation.

Administration, Demography and Authority

After William Bell, there were a series of short secondments, then came three DOs who left significant marks on prewar Malaita: Englishman, Oxford-educated Jack Barley (1930–32, 1933); an Australian, George Eustace Sandars (police sub-inspector 1928, 1929–30, 1931–32, 1933–35, DO 1936–38, 1943, 1945–47); and a Londoner, Charles Bengough (acting, assistant and full DO 1934–35, 1936, 1938–40, 1940–43).56 Others came and went in various assistant capacities, and, given the need to fill gaps in the BSIP administrative team, Barley, Sandars and Bengough were also moved around, a breach of the Lugard maxim for officers to have continuity in any position. Sandars and Bengough were close friends, with Sandars the mentor. Akin shows that despite their expertise, they failed to understand things as simple as Malaitan numerical systems and their phenomenal memory abilities, or the complexity of Malaitan systems of religion, kinship and morality. And like most officers, they stuck to the coast whenever possible and seldom ventured into the mountains. When they did travel inland they rarely socialised with the people there, including most headmen. Significantly for Malaitans, they seldom shared food, the core of reciprocal relations and friendship.57

In 1931, the BSIP carried out its first full population census, recording a total of 94,066: 89,568 Melanesians, 3,847 Polynesians, 478 Europeans, 164 Chinese and 9 Others.58 With the help of the headmen and village constables, the DO calculated that there were 39,830 Malaitans on the island. The main island had an indigenous population of 34,486: 17,451 males and 17,035 females. Small Malaita had a population of 4,870: 2,749 males and 2,121 females. There were another 474 Malaitans in indentured or casual service or attached to mission stations in some capacity, and at least another 5,000 either working on indenture contracts or domiciled in other parts of the protectorate. The total Malaitan population was approximately 40,000, much lower than Bell’s 1924 estimate of 60,000 to 70,000. There were also 135 other Solomon Islanders, one Fijian female (George Bogese’s wife), the Bogeses’ daughter, one man of part-Black American origin, 51 Europeans and three Chinese. Thirty-three

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56 These details come from David Akin’s useful list of the terms served on Malaita by BSIP officials.
57 Akin 2013a, 73–78.
of the Europeans were missionaries. There is reason to believe that the count was incomplete for inland areas, although even if it was wrong by several thousand the total population of the island must still have been under 45,000, with another 5,000 to 6,000 Malaitans elsewhere in the protectorate.

Malaita’s population had certainly declined during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. We know this from piecing together fragments of information and comparison with neighbouring islands. Malaria remained endemic and debilitating, horrific yaws had been widespread, and tropical ulcers were commonplace. Some of the respiratory diseases were self-inflicted from living in smoky houses where cooking and heating fires were enclosed in the buildings. These diseases had long been part of Malaitan life, however, and the rapid population decline came from newly introduced ones—dysentery, influenza, measles, and presumably lung cancer, given the growing level of tobacco use. These new diseases were either introduced or exacerbated by traders, the labour trade and missionary and government contacts.

One of the most difficult things to estimate in the Pacific in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is the extent of population decrease through introduced diseases. In some areas, such as eastern Polynesia, the early postcontact death rate in the first 50 to 100 years has been estimated to have been as high as 90 per cent. Demographers caution, though, against accepting numbers based on random estimates by explorers and missionaries, before reliable census-taking. We are on surer ground with indigenous Fijians: the 1840s population estimate is 200,000 to 300,000, then more reliably 150,000 in 1874, 114,478 in 1881 and 84,470 in 1921. Using safe statistics, from 1874 to 1921, indigenous Fijians declined by at least 43 per cent, and probably more. There is good reason to believe that this rate of decline, or higher, also occurred in Solomon Islands. Chapter 1 raised the possibility that the precontact population for the New Hebrides could have been 700,000 and that there was a rapid postcontact decline. Even if we regard this as an exaggeration, given that the modern Solomon Islands has twice the population of Vanuatu (New Hebrides), 500,000 is a possible precontact population for Solomon Islands (including Bougainville).

59 The official count is 41,052. The 45,000 is the composite figure suggested by DO Barley. BSIP 14/62, ‘Census, 1931’, DO JCB to SG, 6 June 1931.
60 Akin 2013a, 116.
61 Jolly 2000a.
Chapter 2 outlined the types of diseases introduced through missionaries, traders and the labour trade. When considering the size of Malaita’s population, it is useful to note the calculation by Michael Scott of the rate of population decline on neighbouring Makira,62 the number of Malaitans working overseas and within the protectorate, the death rate among labourers in Queensland and Fiji (around 24 to 30 per cent), and the constant importation of diseases. Even if we allow for a lower initial population because of less fertile soils (not renewed by volcanic activity as in Vanuatu, except on Bougainville) and the effects of the higher rainfall and the relative lack of seasonality nearer the equator, we can assume there was a greater than 50 per cent population decrease on Malaita.

There were times, such as during the 1860s and 1870s, when measles epidemics took many lives in Near Oceania. For instance, measles spread through areas of the New Hebrides in the 1860s, and killed about one-quarter of Fiji’s population in the mid-1870s. Measles also spread through the Islander community in Queensland and into Torres Strait, and then passed into southern New Guinea.63 At Mackay and other sugar towns in 1875–76, many hundreds of Islanders became infected with measles and large numbers died.64 The incubation period of the disease is short—up to two weeks—so it may not have survived a voyage from Queensland to the Solomons; its survival on the shorter voyages out of Fiji is more likely. Measles may have spread through the archipelago in 1875 and 1876, even though Bennett’s fine-textured research did not locate evidence of that, nor did I in my study of labour trade sources. Demographer Norma McArthur reports that measles epidemics in the New Hebrides in the 1860s were not universal, probably because of indigenous social and linguistic barriers to close personal contact. Similar patterns may have occurred in the Solomons,65 but measles epidemics did erupt there in the 1880s and 1890s. The 1919–23 mortality rates during the Spanish influenza pandemic were very high, and mission and government records often refer to localised epidemics. Venereal diseases also spread, even though endemic yaws gave immunity to syphilis. Gonorrhoea and other venereal diseases may have caused sterility among women, although direct

64  MM, 29 Apr, 3; 31 July; 16 Oct, 13; and 20 Nov 1875; and 1 Jan 1876; Queenslander, 1, 22 and 28 Jan 1876; Mackay Cemetery Trust Register of Burials, 1875–76.
65  McArthur 1981, 16–18. I have one reference from mid-1875 that suggests measles had not yet reached the Solomons, but was expected soon. MM, 31 July 1875, report from Captain Rosengren of the Lytton.
transmission by Europeans (whalers, traders, etc.) was unlikely on Malaita. Mercifully, there were no large outbreaks of smallpox in the Solomons. The disease did spread through northeast New Guinea and its eastern islands, and whalers may have brought the disease south into the Solomon Archipelago. Although smallpox was introduced into Tanna in the New Hebrides in 1853, there is no evidence of major outbreaks anywhere else in Near Oceania.\(^6\)

Epidemics of bacillary dysentery and respiratory diseases such as influenza, pneumonia and whooping cough were common on Malaita and other Solomon Islands during the early twentieth century.\(^6\) Based on the annual medical reports for the 1910s and 1920s, dysentery was almost endemic on plantations and anywhere Solomon Islanders were forced to congregate, such as prisons.\(^6\) As mentioned in Chapter 9, dysentery epidemics in 1913–15 were thought to have killed no less than 5 per cent and possibly 10 per cent of the entire population, and 3 per cent of the population of the Solomons may have died during the first two years of the Spanish influenza pandemic, with much higher death levels recorded in some areas, for instance at Malu’u. These numbers balance well against Walter Ivens’s 1924 estimate that the population of Sa’a in Small Malaita had halved since he first visited there in the mid-1890s. He also noted that there were few young children. In 1931, an influenza epidemic brought by the Anglican’s *Southern Cross* was estimated to have killed 2.8 per cent of Malaita’s population, an indication of what must have happened regularly after mission and labour trade ships started to visit in the 1870s.\(^6\)

There was a survival advantage to living in scattered inland hamlets; this maintained adequate food supplies and could mitigate the spread of diseases. The highest death rates were always in the new Christian villages on or near the coast. Surprisingly, death rates were usually lower among

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\(^{6\text{\textregistered}}\) SNA, BSIP 14/56, DO WRB to RC RRK, 15 Oct and 31 Dec 1923; BSIP 14/57, DO WRB to RC RRK, 8 Jan 1924; A/DO A. H. Studd to RC RRK, 17 Nov 1924.

\(^{6\text{\textregistered}}\) WPHC, BSIP Annual Medical Reports, 1916–27. Photocopy in the possession of the author, courtesy of Ralph Shlomowitz.

\(^{6\text{\textregistered}}\) Akin 2013a, 116; Scott 2007, 82–88. The population decline on Makira and Ulawa is much clearer. DO Barley collected statistics from his post on Makira, where half of the people died in a 1914 influenza epidemic. Walter Ivens believed that Ulawa’s population had declined by a quarter between 1909 and 1924.
the lagoon-dwellers, who lived in crowded conditions but remained remarkably healthy. Christian villagers abandoned old sanitary rules that had served their ancestors well in the mountains but were now seen as belonging to a pagan world. And let us not forget endemic malaria, which debilitated most of the population, particularly around the coast and at lower altitudes, and killed unknown numbers. The population shift to the coast can only have increased the toll. Those most in contact with the colonial world also wore clothes, which, it was often said, caused sickness when worn wet and damaged their health. Adding up the death estimates and allowing for smaller disease epidemics, Malaita’s population could easily have declined by 40 or 50 per cent between the 1870s and 1930s.

David Akin provides a lengthy analysis of the depopulation phenomenon. Over several decades, Europeans blamed it on the inherent weakness of Melanesian cultures, what they saw as their unhealthy lifestyles and the people’s inability to cope with being part of a global community. It is true that they were unable to withstand common European diseases, but they were also sometimes accused of having lost the will to live. This psychological explanation for depopulation permeated the thinking of missionaries and government officers. Their supposed weakness was used to justify government policies, well-meaning perhaps, but often social engineering gone wrong. The ‘Are’ are were presented as a prime case of a demoralised people whose own customs relating to the size and frequency of mortuary feasts were dragging them down. DO Bengough also blamed their expensive courtship practices (haruna) and large marriage payments (toraana), said to discourage marriages. Officials also condemned the large number of mortuary feasts (houraa) for supposedly disrupting gardening, overburdening married men and forcing single men to stay that way, or at least to marry late, thus reducing birth rates. The administration’s solution was to limit the number of feasts and when they could occur (with no thought to the centrality of these feasts in Malaitan society). Officials also wanted to cap bridewealth payments, and to limit compulsory road-building projects, which people saw to be essentially useless to them. Sandars suggested persuading the people to limit the timing of their feasts to periods when the nali nuts and yams were ripe (September–December

70 This could have been a colonial rationale for stopping ‘natives’ from adopting European ways.
71 Akin 2013a, 119–25; 375 n 73; 376 n 81; 377 n 85.
and April–May) and in plentiful supply. A few years later, this ploy was reported as being well-received, although by 1937 the limits had been rejected.\footnote{SINA, BSIP 27/VI/1, DO GEDS to SG, ‘Annual Report, 1934’, 1 Jan 1935; BSIP 27/VI/1, DO John K. Brownlee to SG, ‘Annual Report, 1936’, 1 Jan 1937; BSIP 27/VI/1, DO GEDS to SG, ‘Annual Report, 1937’, 31 Dec 1937, 22.}

The Pacific War probably provided the ‘Are`are a great advantage: it meant the British left them to their own devices for some years. It is no accident that, after the war, the Maasina Rule movement was founded in `Are`are in the same area where the British had concentrated their dubious repopulation efforts. Akin also points out that three of the foundational leaders—Arisimae, Hoasihau and Nono`oohimae—had all attended Fallowes movement meetings in Gela and came from the area where the government’s social engineering scheme was concentrated.\footnote{Akin 2013a, 105, 122–25. Two other key leaders of the movement, Stephen Sipolo of Kwai and `Abaeata Anifelo of Sinalagu, also attended Fallowes movement meetings (ibid., 105).}

**Subdistrict Leaders**

Malaita in the 1930s had entered a new phase that would carry through until the Pacific War. The largest difference was that these were years of economic depression that stunted plantation growth and limited labour needs, consequently leading to a decline in government revenue. This had an impact on administration throughout the BSIP.

‘Aoke had become a comfortable outpost, with a few eccentricities. The DO’s house on the hill was described by Martin Clemens, who occupied it in 1938, as ‘a pagoda-like structure’, the walls added after the main frame. ‘The result was that every time the wind blew, the roof rose until it was almost airborne, discharging a host of insects, and, on one occasion, a live rat, which danced a jig on top of my mosquito net.’\footnote{Clemens 1962.} There was also a radio receiver, vastly improving communications with Tulagi.\footnote{SINA, BSIP 14/54, DO CNFB to Engineer-in-Charge, Tulagi Radio, 28 Feb 1939.}

Increasingly, part of the DO’s portfolio was dealing with debts relating to bridewealth payments and other financial transfers between Malaitans on Malaita and elsewhere. Alec Maena, the district clerk since 1929, was capable of running the government station in the DO’s absence, and the highly respected Guadalcanal man Sergeant-Major Jacob Vouza ran an
efficient police force. The battle for a permanent assistant DO was won for a few years after 1930 when a second government officer was stationed at Maka at the western entrance to Maramasike Passage, with a small ship provided for his use. The Great Depression soon put an end to this, and Maka was acquired by the Diocese of Melanesia as its short-lived training college.

In January 1934, the official correspondence contains a letter noting the transfer of 10 of the 30 police constables on Malaita back to Tulagi, justified because it was no longer necessary to maintain such a large police establishment. This is a clear sign that Malaita of the 1930s was different from Malaita of the 1910s and 1920s. While there was still plenty of police work to do, it was now more routine and the fears of counterattack from irate Malaitans had passed, except in east Kwaio (and even there the threat was imagined rather than real). In 1934, DO Sandars asked for the force to be increased to 25 men, but his reasoning was very different from that used by earlier DOs:

Although Malaita is certainly quieter than in those days, the work of the Police in their normal function grows heavier yearly owing to the work of investigation—a greater number of crimes being reported. This is not due to lawlessness but rather to the fact that the Malaitaman now comes to the Government to settle his differences instead of concealing them from the Administration.

Reported homicides, once several dozen a year, during the 1930s averaged only two to four a year. In 1935, offences against the person (35) and against property (26) were average for a district of the size of Malaita. The marked change was in adultery charges, of which there were 50 that year. There were still rumours of planned attacks on the DO, although all over Malaita authority structures were changing. Earlier Malaitan leaders owed their prominence to their acceptance within a ‘line’ of descent groups as aofia, fataabu, or ramo. While the new mission and administrative posts did not replace these leadership roles, and sometimes they were occupied by men who were also aofia or had been ramo, they did provide a new tier of authority. By the 1930s, most of the feared

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77 Moore 2013c entry.
78 SINA, BSIP 14/61, DO JCB to SG, 27 Apr 1930.
79 SINA, BSIP 14/32, RC FNA to DO GEDS, 23 Jan 1934; Akin 2013a, 69, 362 n 57.
82 Ibid., 16–19.
Makin Malia

Ramo of pre-1909 fame had died or were elderly: Arisimae and Ara`iasi in `Are`are and Suina`o of To`aba`ita were the last surviving great ramo. In 1937, the only north Malaitan leader singled out as powerful, because he was a leading fataabu and aofia, was Raitalo (Taloanimae) of Fo`odo, who was respected throughout To`aba`ita.83

Malaita’s DOs were ambivalent about implementing the Moorhouse report’s recommendations on appointing local officials. Nevertheless, they all appreciated having an extra set of eyes and ears in the subdistricts to provide them with local information. Many of Jack Barley’s appointments from the early 1930s were still serving up until, and even beyond, the Pacific War; he preferred weaker local officials who owed more to the administration than to their local communities.84 Akin suggests that many of these local officials held no sway in mountain communities and seldom visited inland areas.85 Malaita of the 1930s was divided into five administrative zones, contiguous with the main language divisions: Bali; Kwara`ae; Kwaio, `Are`are; and Small Malaita. Bali in the north had a substantial population and although the people had a reputation as hot-headed, they also solved most disagreements through discussion, not violence. The Kwara`ae and the Langalanga were caricatured as the hardest workers, with the Kwara`ae district also heavily populated, and its language the most difficult to learn.86 In 1938, the majority of the Kwara`ae were adherents of either the SSEM or the Melanesian Mission. The coastal Christian villages had attracted followers from far away, so reallocation of land resources was required, which caused disputes. The Kwaio district included the island’s most rugged mountains and its people were always depicted as taciturn and conservative: dour, abrupt, suspicious of outsiders and apt to resort to their own methods of justice. As mentioned earlier, the `Are` are were regarded as little better, and depicted as perpetually wandering from one feast to another, neglecting their gardens.87 The people of Small Malaita were described more favourably since they were industrious producers of copra and trochus shell, early converts to Christianity, and closely related to the inhabitants of Makira and Ulawa, which stood them apart (though many of them

84 Akin 2013a, 70.
85 Ibid., 62–63.
86 Deck 1933–34; Ivens 1931.
were ‘Are’are people.) While each of these descriptions was in itself a
trope, this is how Europeans saw the various Malaitan groups. Every
annual report repeats some variation of the same pattern.

Subdistrict administration had devolved to 47 headmen, subheadmen
and village constables, though most of these men had limited practical
power and little formal education, the majority being illiterate. They were
appointed supposedly because they were respected in their communities,
but BSIP officers also kept a weather eye on their likelihood to toe the
government line. They were the core of the administration throughout
Malaita, with 26 of them stationed north of ‘Aoke and 21 to the south.
District Officer John White summed them up this way:

Some were appointed after service under the Government in another
capacity—and have no other qualifications—others have some
Government service training and are also the Chiefs of ‘lines’ that form
part of their subdistrict, whilst others hold their office by virtue of a
tyranny in pregovernment days when their force of character, personality
and truculence earned them universal respect.88

These men were tasked with keeping birth, marriage and death registers
(though their efficiency in doing so depended on their level of literacy)
and they had a rudimentary knowledge of what the government was
trying to achieve.

There is no one pattern as to how Malaitan men became government
headmen. Protectorate officers looked for several things. First, they had to
be willing to do the job, and the pay was not much better than could be
obtained as a labourer. They needed to have leadership qualities, or at least
the possibility of developing them. Already being a community leader was
a good thing but not essential. Former policeman had an advantage, and
ability in Pijin English was useful. Being too closely tied to a mission was a
disadvantage, because they might be easily influenced by the missionaries.
And although being an outright scoundrel was not considered a good
quality, having a forceful personality was helpful. Literacy was not crucial,
so long as they had family members who could help with the recording
tasks. The best of them were excellent. Timothy Kakalu’ae, son of
Kwaisulia of Lau Lagoon, worked with ‘dignity and with complete lack
of ostentation’, controlling his subdistrict. DO William Fowler went on to
describe him as ‘very intelligent’, ‘deeply interested in any new departures
and developments’ and ‘intensely loyal’. Other local officials, while they

were criticised for shortcomings, were also praised: Maekali at Malu’u, Ouasihu at Wairokai, Mamama at Fo’odo, Siru at Kwai and Doraweewee on Small Malaita.\textsuperscript{89} Maekali was the most powerful headman, and in the 1930s he was allowed to judge serious cases unaided, although there was always a review by the DO. Maekali was a strong leader, both loved and hated by his people.\textsuperscript{90} However, the administrative team also included former \textit{ramo} such as Ara`iasi at Tarapaina, and elderly Arisimae at Wairokai Harbour, who were still feared because of their old positions. Arisimae, who retired from government service in the mid-1930s, was still consulted on matters of custom. Suina`o from Malu’u and Bita`ama, the youngest of the surviving northern \textit{ramo}, was never added to the team, but was an extremely powerful leader and sought out for advice.\textsuperscript{91}

Map 5 (Chapter 1) shows the Bina and related descent groups in east Fataleka. The first east Fataleka headman was Harry Rafe from the Kanole descent group cluster, who had worked in Fiji. (The British recorded him as from `Ataa, which was not his primary place of allegiance.) Lotaa from the Rakwane descent group held the deputy headman position from 1925 to 1927. He had worked on plantations in the Western Solomons. Both Lotaa and Rafe spoke Pijin English, Rafe also spoke Pijin Fijian, and they were wise to the ways of Europeans. Rakwane was the most powerful descent group in east Fataleka, with a direct line of descent from Bina, the founding clan. Kanole descent group was likewise important, being a large ‘line’ among inland descent groups. Both men were appointed by William Bell, but their authority depended on their preeminence within east Fataleka. Lotaa resigned in 1927 when Bell was killed, but Rafe continued in his position until succeeded by Alatala from Farere, a descent group from an artificial island at `Ataa, closely related to Rakwane. Alatala only held the position for about one year before he was sacked for corruption. He was followed by Fono from Kanole for two years, but Fono was dismissed when he objected to collecting the head tax, replaced by Kwaisisigwa from Gwalekafo Village in Kanole, for another year or so until he too was dismissed, for stealing pigs. Nenemo from Fusai followed, serving for about four years; he died from tuberculosis late in the Pacific War. Ishmael Itea, Lotaa’s son, was appointed headman in 1947 and held the position until 1975. Itea, an ex-labourer and policeman, had in 1942 joined the

\textsuperscript{90} Akin 2013a, 84–86.
British Solomon Islands Defence Force assisting the Allies. In 1943 he served as part of the guard for the high commissioner in exile on Malaita. Itea said that he was chosen to be the next headman by the powerful Ilokwao, the last foakali (senior fataabu) of Bina, and presented to the DO as the most suitable candidate. It may well be that after Bell DOs tried to select compliant leaders, but this was never so in east Fataleka, where local people helped to find the best candidate.  

These new-style bigmen remained an alternative power base to the European missionaries, overwhelmingly from the SSEM, and a growing group of indigenous mission teachers, also mainly from the SSEM, although indigenous Anglican priests had also begun to make their mark. Education was entirely in the hands of the missions, run through ‘Bible schools’, which used access to literacy to win converts for Christianity rather than pursuing a more robust educational process. Whereas once Malaitan men aspiring to transcend their normal lives had left the island to work as labourers, beginning in the 1920s two other paths became available: joining the government or the missions. Literacy, gained through the missions and a path for advancement since the 1880s, became an increasingly important cultural bridge during the early decades of the century.

The subdistrict system and the three levels of Malaitan officials became more settled and organised. Boundaries were delimited and more isolated areas were included in the web of administration. The subdistricts on the east coast were still largely beyond effective administrative contact—the coastal people viewed government officers as primarily tax-collectors and hunters of murderers, while people living inland remained mostly aloof in their isolated small hamlets. DO Barley wrote:

> The District Headmen are, for the most part, trying to do their best under the circumstances, but it must be remembered that they have in the past been taught to regard themselves as men in charge of so many ‘Tax-houses’ only, that they are quite unaccustomed to acting as agents in bringing their people into personal contact with the Government and are in fact, in many instances, afraid to venture without Police protection into various parts of their sub-Districts which are supposed to be under their administrative control.

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92 Information collected by the author in east Fataleka in 1976; Laracy and White 1988, 118.
93 SINA, BSIP 14/61, DO JCB to SG, 3 July 1930.
The subdistricts were established along linguistic, tribal and political boundaries, as understood by the DOs. Slowly, they became geographic administrative units, each with a tax-house erected on the coast at a recognised meeting and market place frequented by both coastal and inland people. The subdistricts’ boundaries were clear on the coast, but not inland.

The colonial administration’s communication was mainly by small government vessels and the decaying coastal road to the north. During the late 1930s, this road—really a 2.7-metre-wide track—was renewed around the north from ‘Aoke to Lau Lagoon, and there were plans to extend it south along the east coast to ‘Ataa. The main vehicles were envisaged to be bicycles, of which there were already a few on Malaita. DOs in the 1930s also noted that a road was needed across the central mountains from Dala to Fokanakafo (later the route of the first cross-Malaita road, built in the 1970s), and another in ‘Are’are from Wairokai in the west to Takataka in the east (not built to this day).

Native Councils and Courts

Extra Native Administration Regulations were passed in 1929, added to the already onerous 1922 Regulations. Villages had to be sanitary and structurally reorganised along lines that officers felt were proper. Violators could end up in the native courts.

Local councils in the Solomons were developed in a very ad hoc manner and initially the emphasis was on the codification of custom. Early experiments in local government began with the Melanesian Mission’s Vaukolu gathering on Gela from 1887, later taken over by the government, and then sidelined. However, in 1939 the government began trials of local government bodies in north Malaita. Each district was split into a series of territorial divisions known as administrative subdistricts. Establishing native courts to deal with customary offences was discussed as early as 1929, but the high commissioner concluded that customary law needed to be codified first, with differentiation between Christians.

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96 Moore 2013c entry; Akin 2013a, 56–58, 358 n 22; Bennett 1987, 92.
and followers of ancestors, particularly on Malaita. This approach was impracticable and native courts slowly evolved without codification. The native court concept was boosted by the support in 1934 of anthropologist H. Ian Hogbin, who had visited Rennell Island briefly, researched his doctorate on Ontong Java in 1927, and then completed more fieldwork on Guadalcanal and north Malaita in 1933. Hogbin, a strong advocate of native administration, suggested reasserting the powers of bigmen to mediate and judge in customary situations. DOs tried to make a deeper study of customary laws and the geographic boundaries of language areas, although they still had little understanding, and these early local courts had no legal standing. By the late 1930s, based on very partial and sometimes erroneous government knowledge of indigenous cultures, native arbitration courts began to operate. The first started in 1939 on Isabel and in To’aba’ita in north Malaita, in 1940 on Small Malaita, and in 1941 in Baelelea and Baegu, also in northern Malaita. These councils began working to codify custom within their particular areas. Kwara’ae operated under a single native court from October 1941.97 Discussions were underway for similar courts in Kwaio and ‘Are’are, aimed particularly at limiting the elaborate *houraa* mortuary ceremonies that officers and some local people saw to be problematic.

DO Bengough was dubious about the ability of the courts to judge properly, and since there was no extra money to train headmen, the process was muddled.98 Similar courts and councils began in other districts between 1940 and the Pacific War. Some of the government headmen were unhappy with the courts because they cut into their authority (forgetting that they in turn had themselves cut across earlier indigenous authority). Solving land disputes through the court system became more common in the 1930s, particularly in Western District and in north Malaita and also around ‘Aoke. A Native Courts Ordinance was passed in 1942 to create a mechanism for solving local disputes. Hogbin, advisor to the BSIP on the establishment of local courts, prepared a booklet in 1942 on native councils and courts. He was always optimistic, but here proved overly so regarding the level of success the courts had or would have, and the Pacific War derailed any real progress under government auspices, since the government essentially ceased to function on Malaita.99

98 Akin 2013a, 128–30.
Between 1940 and 1942, various district officers established local court systems on a trial basis. In 1944, High Commissioner Sir Philip Mitchell proposed a system of local councils based on his work while posted in Uganda in the 1930s. When the administration resumed after the war, by 1946 Isabel had 4 separate councils, Choiseul 7, Guadalcanal 13, Gela 3, and Malaita 15. While colonial officials believed Malaitans were inflexible in their customary beliefs, they also worried that codification might make customary beliefs still less flexible. David Akin points out that although Malaitans do have strong beliefs, they are also very political and have proved adept at modifying indigenous codes in changing circumstances; evidence for this reaches back to the Queensland and Fiji labour period. Compensatory payments were a necessity in most customary court negotiation, although BSIP officers often made poorly informed decisions regarding how to allocate awards. DO Barley, who opposed appointing local officials, was also against codification and asserted that Malaitans were incapable of serving impartially on native courts. Akin gives a neat summary of Malaitan attitudes and abilities:

When Malaitans assess disputes they often draw on deep local knowledge of long-term, complex relationships of the disputants and their groups. Such sophistication comes only from enduring social engagement. I have often heard Kwaio declare their inability to properly evaluate disputes between Kwaio who live far away and whom they do not know well, citing their lack of social and historical knowledge about the case and its principals. In any Malaitan community certain individuals are known for their superior knowledge of social networks and legal and other histories and for having the brains, talent and integrity to effectively apply it to skilfully managing disputes; they are called on when trouble arises.

It was no different in the 1920s and 1930s, and like many colonial officials, the DOs had to rely on knowledgeable Malaitans to advise them when hearing disputes. Listening to and watching the reaction of an audience at a court case was sometimes their best recourse in deciding on their verdicts.
Customs and Punishments

Malaita in the 1930s was no longer the old Mala. Malaitans mixing together as labourers in Queensland, Fiji, Samoa, New Caledonia and the BSIP introduced new languages, particularly Pijin English and Pijin Fijian (though the latter soon faded as a viable lingua franca). The diversity of languages spoken on Malaita had never been an insurmountable barrier. Malaitans who travel outside of their own language areas say that they can ‘hear’ the other languages even if they cannot reply fluently in them; although, say, ‘Are’are in the south would have to strain to communicate with To’aba’ita from the far north. The intermixing of labourers and mission workers only increased their abilities to communicate across languages, and Pijin English developed into a stable common language.105

One telling indicator of change was a June 1934 request from the Burns Philp manager at Makambo for Langalanga dancers to perform for tourists on visiting Burns Philp ships, in addition to the stevedores who already danced as a sideline.106 Exactly what they performed is unknown, but one photograph shows dancers at Fauaabu hospital in the 1930s who seem to be combining elements of mao and possibly sango performances. This may be similar to the dances that were performed for tourists at Tulagi. Malaitans were improvising and changing cultural performances to meet new circumstances.

Also in 1934, for the first time, Malaitans gained access to what an anthropologist had written about them. A copy of Ian Hogbin’s Oceania article on his fieldwork on Guadalcanal and Malaita (1934) was available at Malu’u and caused annoyance because of erroneous comments he made on the prevalence of incest. DO Sandars, who did not like Hogbin, said that the To’aba’ita had good reason to complain since they were ‘the most strictly moral’ of all Malaitans.107 The missions and the government brought about major changes in local activities such as bridewealth exchanges at marriages. Inflation had increased the size of such payments to such an extent that they exceeded the ability of many young men to pay. This meant that some men could no longer marshal enough bridewealth contributions to get married, or remained bachelors so as to avoid the great social debt to contributors that would result. SSEM adherents in

105  Keesing 1988a; 1988b.
106  SINA, BSIP 14/32, Manager, Burns Philp (South Sea) Company Ltd to RC FNA, 18 Aug 1934.
east Kwara`ae had fixed bridewealth at three *tafuli`ae* (10 joined strings of shell wealth a fathom (1.82 metres) long, valued at £3 per *tafuli`ae*) for a single woman and one *tafuli`ae* for a widow. DO White suggested that attempts should be made to establish this as the standard throughout Malaita.108

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**Figure 10.9:** This dance was performed at the Hospital of the Epiphany at Fauaabu in the early 1930s.

Close examination shows a wooden structure on poles in the centre, around which singers would have been sitting, and a slit drum. The performance appears to have been staged for visitors and may be a hybrid form of *mao* and *sango* dance performance, or simply a Fauaabu area variation of *mao*.

Source: British Museum, Lloyd Francis Collection, 3; David Akin’s analysis 13–14 Dec 2015.

The demographic changes caused by the formation of large Christian villages around the coast had multiple consequences. Except on the crowded artificial islands, most Malaitans had always lived in small hamlets. The new concentrations were foreign and provided a much freer lifestyle, which altered moral standards as men and women mixed more freely, separate accommodation of males and females ceased, and

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108 SINA, BSIP 14/63, A/DO AFJW to RC FNA, 3 May 1932; BSIP 14/30, RC FNA to A/DO AFJW, 5 Apr 1932. Intra-mission debates over the proper size of bridewealth carried on for decades and continue still.
10. MAKING MALA INTO MALAITA, 1927–42

older authority and behavioural rules faded in import. Adultery, once punishable by death, became more common, even though it went against both Christian and indigenous teachings. In 1924, a new law punished male and female adulterers with a £5 fine or three months in prison, with six months for a second offence.\(^{109}\) Penalties were increased again in 1929, with an agreement that the full severity of the law would be applied only on Malaita. Akin researched a sample of 225 court cases on Malaita between 1931 and 1935 and found that 20 per cent involved adultery.\(^ {110}\) The court statistics for 1935 reveal that adultery convictions from Christian settlements were twice as high as among the majority of Malaitans who still followed their ancestors. Malaitans, particularly non-Christians, were never happy with what they saw to be the light punishments dished out for adultery. The maximum penalty after 1929 was one year in prison, and two years for a second offence. In some cases the sentence was only four months. Although few Malaitans continued to advocate death as the fitting punishment for adultery, most still thought the offence warranted at least a 10-year sentence.\(^ {111}\)

Another area of difference between the government and Malaitans was sorcery and its punishment. The government wanted to end the power of the *ramo* to punish transgressions, yet it was unwilling to punish sorcery, which most Europeans, with the exception of some missionaries, thought was mere superstition or the work of charlatans. But to Malaitans it was real and an alternative to tangible punishment. By the 1930s, Malaitans were convinced sorcery had increased due to government inaction and officers were at a loss as to how to deal with the issue.\(^ {112}\)

Other changes were beyond government control. A taro blight ruined crops on Malaita during the mid-1920s and caused a switch to the sweet potato as the root crop staple. This had social consequences since many crucial ceremonial rituals were focused on taro and yam gardening.\(^ {113}\) Taro and yam gardens were a source of pride for men, who worked hard in them. Both declined as crops, and as they did many associated rituals and linkages between different regions on Malaita faded away or were

\(^{109}\) Akin 2013a, 89–91.
\(^{112}\) Akin 2013a, 91.
\(^{113}\) Packard 1975 reports on a taro blight that struck Bougainville in the 1940s, which was an extension of the same problem that began on Malaita in the 1920s.
greatly simplified. Sweet potato was viewed as a woman’s crop, which changed gender dynamics and led to more women’s work, just as had the introduction of metal gardening tools. In Kwaio, people believe their taro has never fully recovered from the attacks and shrine desecrations by police patrols following the massacre of William Bell and his party in 1927. The Kwaio way of dealing with the blight was to reintroduce feral taro varieties and breed them with the domestic varieties, showing a sophisticated knowledge of horticultural techniques.\textsuperscript{114}

The last great divide remaining was between the Christians and those who still followed their ancestral religions. There were many tensions, for example over non-Christian claims of \textit{fa`abua} (compensation) against Christians, for everything from sexual trespass to homicides. Many Christians rejected what they said was a payment to the devil and protested that compensation rules no longer applied to them, but they nevertheless feared the consequences of outright refusal to pay.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure10.10.jpg}
\caption{Peter Abu`ofa in old age working on carving a slit drum. By the time Abu`ofa died in 1937 he had become alienated from the SSEM, which he helped found.}
\end{figure}

\textit{Source: Deck Collection Coloured Glass Slides, 5.}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{114} SINA, BSIP 29/I/4, DO WFMC to SG, 30 June 1939; Akin 1993, 230–34; 2013a, 18, 401 n 81.
\end{flushright}
Conclusion

The coming war was beginning to affect Malaita. By 1939, there are references in the official correspondence to the war raging in Europe and thoughts about forming a local militia. In east Kwaio, a story circulated that an important ancestress spirit, La’aka, had announced that American warships and troops would soon arrive and destroy Tulagi and the BSIP administration. When the ships did not arrive at Uru Harbour on the predicted day, the organisers were arrested, but not before many people had killed pigs or, in a few areas, left their homes and resettled within two specified, protected villages.115

The 1940 and 1941 annual reports provide a snapshot of Malaita just before the Pacific War. Labour recruiting for plantations had steadily decreased. Very few signed on at ´Aoke, most being taken to Tulagi where they signed in front of the inspector of labour. Even the regular movement of labour from Langalanga to Tulagi to work as stevedores had dwindled. Taxes had recently been collected from 8,298 Malaitans, 85 per cent of them at only 1/-.. Whereas in late 1900 no Europeans lived permanently on Malaita, in 1910 there were 16, along with a Fijian, some Indigenous Australian women, and a few New Hebrideans. In 1941, Malaitans on the island were said to number around 41,100, and 49 Europeans and one Chinese resided there. There were also 300 cattle, five horses and 20 goats.

The four Christian denominations were now well-established and their congregations together were equal to the number of Malaitans who still practised their ancestral religions. Presuming these statistics are correct, the early rates of conversion to Christianity had slowed in the 1920s and 1930s. Health facilities had increased from nil to several small hospitals, leprosariums and a postnatal clinic. Schools of various types were functioning, although their standards were low. Thousands of Malaitan men continued to enlist as indentured labourers, even at the reduced pay rates. From a situation where the DO did not feel safe even in his house at ´Aoke, now a team of local administrators was spread throughout the island.

There were two motorised district vessels, a far cry from Edge-Partington and Bell in their whaleboats. The MV Auki, now 44 years old, was about to be retired and replaced by MV Mala II. Roads and bridges were under construction: the upgraded northern road was complete and the west coast end of one from ‘Aoke to Kwai on the east coast was being cleared. A demonstration farm had been established on the Kwaibala River near ‘Aoke in 1941, on the site that later became King George VI School. Paddy rice had been introduced in north Malaita and at Bina and Anoano. Commercial agriculture was now limited to the Fairymead Sugar Company plantations at Baunani and Manaba, where 900 hectares of coconut palms produced 370 tons of copra a year, and 16 hectares was planted with cocoa. To save money, the two plantations were being run as one. Trade was minimal—there were five Chinese trade stores in 1940, and still none at ‘Aoke. By 1941, only one remained open, although Chinese trading vessels were still circumnavigating the island.\textsuperscript{116}

The rudiments of the new Malaita were in place, supressed by economic depression, but about to experience revolutionary changes due to the Pacific War.
